
**NORTH WOODS EXPANSION
MASTER PLAN TASK FORCE**

FINAL REPORT

*PRESENTED TO
THE CITY OF ATLANTA*

September 2005

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TASK FORCE MISSION

On February 17, 2005 Mayor Shirley Franklin announced the formation of the North Woods Expansion Master Plan Task Force (“Task Force”), appointing a task force of eleven individuals and charging them with reviewing the preliminary master plan for the North Woods of Piedmont Park developed over the past year by a community advisory group, consultants and City staff.

The Task Force was asked to review traffic, parking, transportation strategies and plans to accommodate the transportation and mobility needs of both Piedmont Park and the Atlanta Botanical Gardens while promoting cultural and educational opportunities for Atlanta residents and visitors.

In announcing the Task Force, Mayor Franklin said, “As a community we have earned the reputation of working out our most difficult challenges including water/sewer financing, the honoring of Mayor Allen and Mayor Jackson, and the needs of our homeless population by allowing task forces such as this one to conduct their work and produce a viable recommendation. The members of the Task Force represent a cross section of civic experience, professional expertise and a sincere commitment to contributing to the betterment of our city.”

The following individuals were appointed to the Task Force:

Sharon A. Gay, <i>Chair</i>	Mayoral Appointee
Dorothy Y. Kirkley	Atlanta Botanical Garden Appointee
Michael W. Tyler	Piedmont Park Conservancy Appointee
William H. Teasley	Atlanta Planning Advisory Board Appointee
Randal Lautzenheiser	NPU-E Appointee
Dianne Olansky	NPU-F Appointee
Catherine L. Ross	Mayoral Appointee
Michael Dobbins	Mayoral Appointee
Neil Williams	Mayoral Appointee
Oscar L. Harris, Jr.	Mayoral Appointee
Jesse Hill, Jr.	Mayoral Appointee

The Task Force was asked to complete its work in a 60 – 75 day timeframe and present its recommendations in mid-May.

TASK FORCE METHODOLOGY

The Task Force held four meetings in Spring 2005. Its work began with a meeting on March 21, 2005 at Magnolia Hall in Piedmont Park, where the members were briefed by representatives of the Piedmont Park Conservancy ("Conservancy") and the Atlanta Botanical Garden ("Garden") on the background of the planning process and the details of the proposed North Woods Expansion Master Plan. The Task Force members then toured the Park, focusing on the expansion areas and the proposed deck site.

The second Task Force meeting was held on April 1, 2005, in Committee Room 1 at Atlanta City Hall. The Task Force received written and verbal presentations from invited representatives of stakeholder groups, surrounding neighborhoods, and persons with expertise in transportation and urban planning and related fields. The Task Force conducted meetings on April 18th and May 5th in the Old Council Chambers in Atlanta City Hall. During the April 18th meeting, the Task Force sought explanations from various City, Garden and Conservancy representatives on issues and questions raised in the previous meetings. At the final meeting, Task Force members discussed and debated the findings and observations and decided upon the conclusions and recommendations contained in this Report. Minutes of the Task Force meetings, including the text of any written comments submitted in connection with the April 1st meeting, are included in this report at Appendix E.

In addition to the formal committee meetings, several Task Force members went on a walking tour of the Park and the expansion areas on April 28th. A number of Task Force members also attended a forum hosted by the Atlanta Planning Advisory Board and the Community Development/Human Resources Committee of City Council held in City Council Chambers on April 21, 2005.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

PIEDMONT PARK: THE EARLY YEARS

In early 1887, a group of Atlanta's most powerful and wealthy individuals began the history of what was to become Piedmont Park by purchasing a 189.43 acre farm just north of the City of Atlanta. Their purpose was the establishment of an exclusive club and park for horse enthusiasts. Shortly thereafter, the Piedmont Exposition Company was incorporated to develop Piedmont Park as an exposition/fair ground. The directors of the Exposition Company made enough money from this first fair to buy all but four acres of the Park from the Gentlemen's Driving Club in 1889.

The Cotton States and International Exposition was held on the property in 1895 and lasted for 100 days. During that time, African-American leaders, state and national political leaders, internationally known entertainers, many professional organizations, and important women's groups and individuals came to Atlanta and/or Piedmont Park. President Grover Cleveland and Vice President Adlai Stevenson made appearances, as did millionaire John Jacob Astor. Booker T. Washington made the principal address at the grand opening.

Atlanta Mayor John B. Goodwin refused to buy Piedmont Park from the Exposition Company in 1894 because it was too far out from the City. In 1904, however, pressured by residents and certain private speculators, the Atlanta City Council voted to purchase Piedmont Park for \$99,000. Two years later, the Olmsted Brothers firm (Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and John Charles Olmsted) was hired to design a landscape plan for the Park. This plan, however, was never fully funded or implemented.

In the 1920s, a large building program took place, which included the construction of new entrances at Park Drive and Tenth Street, a new bathhouse, stone entrance gates, a golf course and a golf clubhouse, as well as the channeling of Clear Creek. The Park has continued to attract many individuals and groups, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1935. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was the site for concerts by groups ranging from the Allman Brothers Band to symphony orchestras. Piedmont Park has hosted such diverse organizations as the Atlanta Arts Festival, the Gay Pride celebration, the Peachtree Road Race, jazz and music festivals, the Dogwood Festival and the National Black Arts Festival.

The history of the Park is described in more detail in the Piedmont Park Master Plan adopted by the City in 1982.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

In 1980, Mayor Maynard Jackson supported the creation of a public/private partnership in which the Atlanta Botanical Garden was born. At the time, the Park was in a state of deterioration, and the Conservancy was 10 years from its creation. Mayor Jackson saw the unique opportunity to turn 33 acres fronting Piedmont Avenue into a cultural venue for Atlanta and its visitors, and therefore the City entered into a 50-year lease with the Atlanta Botanical Garden, a non-profit organization.

Since that beginning, the Garden has invested over \$27.5 million to finance capital facilities and displays. Additionally, almost \$6 million annually is spent on operating expenses related to improvement and maintenance of gardens, educational programming and auxiliary services.

For further information on the history and mission of the Garden, see the letter from Executive Director Mary Pat Matheson included as Appendix R.

ADOPTION OF 1982 PIEDMONT PARK MASTER PLAN AND FORMATION OF PIEDMONT PARK CONSERVANCY

In 1982, during the first administration of Mayor Andrew Young, the City adopted the first master plan for the Park. The plan included an analysis of the physical conditions and characteristics of the Park and surrounding areas. The plan incorporated a series of recommendations to address operational and maintenance issues and improve the Park environment.

Among the conclusions included in the 1982 plan was a recommendation that a non-profit organization be formed to “aid the City in the operation and financing of future improvements in the park.” A small group of concerned citizens and Park neighbors joined together in 1989 to form the Piedmont Park Conservancy. The relationship between the Conservancy and the City was formalized in the 1992 Memorandum of Understanding, making official the public-private partnership and affirming the mutual goals of rehabilitating and maintaining the Park. Since that time, the Conservancy has raised and invested over \$20 million to restore and improve the Park. See Appendix S for further details of the Conservancy’s activities.

ACQUISITION OF HALPERN AND WEST SITES AND CONSTRUCTION OF COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW FACILITIES

The City’s facilities and engineering practices for stormwater management have long been integrated into the North Woods sector. As early as 1895, a combined sewer trunk to serve the midtown area was constructed through the Park, flowing into Clear Creek at its junction with Orme Creek. In the early 1990s, the City initiated efforts to improve this situation. With the proceeds of water/sewer revenue bonds, the City purchased 8.4 acres on Monroe Drive adjacent to the eastern edge of the North Woods (the “Halpern property”) and additional acreage fronting on Piedmont Avenue at the northern edge of the North Woods (the “West property”). The City buried the previously existing stone culvert from Tenth Street to a concrete culvert constructed 1,000 feet north of Park Drive. A combined sewer overflow (CSO) facility and overflow outlet system were constructed on the Halpern property. The West property, which is predominately floodplain, was dedicated for use for stormwater mitigation.

ADOPTION OF 1995 PIEDMONT PARK MASTER PLAN

The City updated its vision and goals for the Park in the 1990s. These efforts culminated in the adoption of a new master plan, which included a number of recommendations for improvement of the physical environment and infrastructure. Over the next few years, the City and the Conservancy worked in partnership to complete major improvements to Oak Hill, Tenth Street Meadow, Lake Clara Meer and the Front Lawn.

DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH WOODS EXPANSION MASTER PLAN 2003-2005

As the Conservancy and the City proceeded with implementation of the Active Oval improvements specified in the 1995 plan, they turned their attention to the remaining major project, rehabilitation of the North Woods and incorporation of the West and Halpern properties. The Conservancy received a grant from the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation in September 2003 to support the planning process. The Conservancy convened the North Woods Stakeholder Committee in September 2003. See Appendix N for an explanation of the mission and process of that Committee. The Stakeholder Committee recommended that a shared parking facility should be studied and reviewed the first draft of the Joint Shared Parking Analysis prepared by Carl Walker, Inc. (see Appendix H). The Conservancy briefed NPU-E and NPU-F on their planning efforts in November 2003, and both NPUs concurred that joint parking options should be analyzed.

The Stakeholder Committee completed a strategic plan in December 2003, recommending the following objectives for development of the three sites:

- ♦ Increase the amount of usable public park land in and adjacent to Piedmont Park.
- ♦ Create usable and sustainable public green space of the highest design quality in keeping with the general goals of the adopted Piedmont Park Master Plan.
- ♦ Increase and enhance access into and through the Park by pedestrians from multiple points around the Park.
- ♦ Increase and enhance access to the Park by visitors coming from further than walking distance to the Park.
- ♦ [E]nsure the long term sustainability of all newly developed areas of the Park.
- ♦ Seek to provide meaningful park experiences and activities for populations currently underserved by the Park.

These objectives are discussed in more detail in the Master Plan Draft at Appendix C.

The Conservancy then retained the services of Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh & Associates, a firm that included architects who prepared the 1995 plan, to assist in preparing a Master Plan for the expansion area. The Conservancy expanded its standing Advisory Committee to include representatives of additional constituent groups and conducted nearly 50 open meetings and guided tours during the year-long discussion and evaluation process. For a list of the Advisory Committee members, see Appendix O. The activities of the Advisory Committee are further discussed in Appendices M and P.

A version of the Master Plan that included a joint parking structure at the western hillside edge of the North Woods was endorsed by a majority of the Advisory Committee members. The Conservancy Board of Directors endorsed the same plan in late fall 2004. A draft report dated January 31, 2005 was promulgated (see Appendix C).

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED PLAN

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NORTH WOODS EXPANSION MASTER PLAN

The plan proposes to develop 53 acres of green space for public use and access by rehabilitating and opening to pedestrian access the North Woods and by incorporating the Halpern and West properties into the Park. These improvements will provide new pedestrian and bicyclist access from Piedmont Road and Monroe Drive and add considerable new active and passive recreation areas such as a skate park, soccer fields and a community garden and orchard. The plan calls for removal of an existing open concrete culvert and restoration of Orme Creek and Clear Creek stream banks. In conjunction with the Clean Water Atlanta sewer improvement program, the City will construct a deep tunnel from the Halpern property to the North CSO outflow outlet, which is intended to significantly reduce sewer overflows.

THE PARKING STRUCTURE

Because of the considerable controversy that has arisen surrounding the parking structure element of the Master Plan, additional discussion is warranted. As part of its strategic planning process in 2002, the Garden identified the need for additional parking, particularly for special events and exhibits hosted by the Garden as well as for private events such as weddings and receptions. Initially, the Piedmont Driving Club and the Ansley Park Civic Association encouraged the Garden and Conservancy to explore collaborative parking solutions. In May 2003, however, the Driving Club decided to proceed with construction of parking improvements for its own needs within its property. The Garden engaged Walker Parking Consultants to analyze three parking site alternatives within the existing Garden leasehold. A report issued July 1, 2003 (see Appendix I) found flaws with each alternative.

Meanwhile, the Conservancy had begun discussions of the North Woods expansion planning effort. In August 2003, the Garden and Conservancy decided to explore joint parking options and engaged Carl Walker, Inc., to conduct a joint shared parking analysis. The results of that study, released on October 18, 2003, are included as Appendix H. As to the Garden, this study concluded that the 121-space surface parking lot is sufficient to accommodate current visitor parking demand but is insufficient for special events and does not allow for growth in Garden attendance. The study also evaluated the parking needs for various event facilities within the Park (exclusive of major festivals) together with some allowance for users of the tennis courts and ball fields, parents with small children, pool patrons, joggers and bicyclists. However, the study did not include parking demand from the 2.5 million annual Park users who do not fall into the other categories. The study concluded that this combined parking demand exceeded the available capacity in the 150-space main lot, that a shared parking facility with 500-540 spaces would provide considerable additional parking for Garden and Conservancy special events, but that a facility of a 1,000 spaces would be required to enable both organizations to hold large special events simultaneously while also providing parking for Garden and Park visitors. (See Appendix M for a chronology of these events.)

During the design charrettes and small group meetings, the Advisory Committee was presented with alternative locations for a parking structure. (See Appendix K for a summary of their analysis.)

DECK DESIGN:

- ♦ 800-space structured parking facility will be built into one acre of currently unused 60-foot hillside at the western edge of the North Woods adjacent to the existing boundary and rear loop drive of the Garden.

- ◆ Top level of deck will be one-half story above the grade of the existing drive.
- ◆ When viewed from the Park, 2½ stories (25-30 feet) will be above grade and 2½ stories will be below grade.
- ◆ Above-grade portion will be concealed with a 16-foot earthen berm and extensive landscaping, including large trees planted on the berm and vines growing on trellises.
- ◆ Garden visitors will enter the Garden from the existing driveway at the intersection of Piedmont Avenue and The Prado and enter the deck from the top level. A twelve-foot wide pedestrian/cyclist path will be constructed to lead directly from the loop road into the Park, separating vehicular and non-vehicular traffic.
- ◆ Park users will enter the deck by traveling the existing roadway from Monroe Drive into the Halpern property that now circles around the CSO building. This roadway will be extended 250 linear feet above grade across the Beltline and Park and will continue below grade and through a tunnel into the bottom level of the deck. A pedestrian/bicyclist bridge will be constructed to cross over the drive as it enters the tunnel.
- ◆ Construction of the deck will require removal of 80 trees from the hillside, 33 of which have been determined to be diseased or otherwise in poor quality. The plan calls for replacement of these trees with plant material of the same caliper.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS OF PARKING DESIGN:

- ◆ 2.6 acres of existing asphalt surface parking lots in the Park and Garden will be converted to greenspace.
- ◆ In exchange for permission to construct the parking facility at the edge of the North Woods, the Garden will release 3.3 acres of the Storza Woods currently under lease to the Garden for incorporation into the Piedmont Park Master Plan.
- ◆ At the Park entrance, Park Drive will be closed to vehicular access other than maintenance or emergency vehicles.

FUNDING:

- ◆ The structure will be constructed by the Garden and funded by private donations to the Garden. No City funds will be used.

PARKING FEES ARE PROPOSED AS FOLLOWS:

- ◆ 75 cents for first half-hour.
- ◆ \$1.00 for each additional half-hour, with a daily maximum of \$12.00.
- ◆ Proceeds will be shared with the Conservancy.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO DRAFT MASTER PLAN

There appears to be broad public support for the elements of the expansion plan other than the deck. Indeed, the Task Force has received no materials or communications critical of the other elements. Many experts and observers, including opponents of the deck, are quite supportive of the expansion plan and its components.

However, community response to the deck proposal has been mixed. Some surrounding neighborhood organizations, such as the Ansley Park Civic Association and the Virginia-Highland/Morningside Parents Association, have voted to support the Master Plan and the deck, while others, including the Morningside/Lenox Park Civic Association and the Midtown Neighbors Association, have taken the opposite position. As of the date of the final meeting of the Task Force, 16 of the 17 neighborhood planning units that had taken a vote on the Master Plan had voted to oppose the deck. Friends of Piedmont Park, an ad hoc grassroots organization, has taken a strong position against the deck.

The reasons cited for opposition to the deck may be generally summarized as follows:

- ♦ The location is ill-advised. Many observers object to the placement of a parking facility on public park land, especially when a stated purpose of the facility is to provide parking for special events occurring at the Garden. Critics also object to the extension of the Halpern property drive across the Beltline and into the Park, thereby bringing vehicular traffic into the Park.
- ♦ Critics contend the planning process, particularly the scope and range of options presented to the Advisory Committee, was “flawed” and “undemocratic.” They contend that the decision to include the deck in the Master Plan had already been made by the Garden and Conservancy, and that the range of options and alternatives presented to the Advisory Committee and through the design charrettes was too narrow.
- ♦ Opponents contend that better alternatives may exist for serving the transportation and parking needs of the Park, including construction of parking at the Halpern and West sites or on adjacent privately owned properties, the provision of on-street parking spaces and shuttle service to nearby private parking decks, and enhanced connections to public transit.

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

1. Piedmont Park and the Atlanta Botanical Garden are regional recreational and cultural facilities.

As a result of the size (219 acres), central location, and the scope and variety of amenities offered, Piedmont Park and the Atlanta Botanical Garden attract visitors from throughout the Atlanta region. Indeed, from the beginning of its history as the site of the Cotton States Exposition, Piedmont Park appears to have been conceived and designed to attract a broad audience. Recent improvements by the City and Conservancy have enhanced its appeal. The Conservancy estimates that the Park receives over 2.5 million visitors per year. Garden attendance has increased rapidly in recent years, growing to over 425,000 in 2004.

Given this regional characteristic, the travel criteria and needs of Park and Garden visitors differ from those of visitors to a neighborhood or community park. Even without taking into consideration large special events such as the Dogwood Festival, the Park and Garden draw visitors from a wide geographical area, which results in an impact to the surrounding streets and neighborhoods outside the Park boundaries.

2. Patronage of Piedmont Park and the Garden will continue to increase as a result of various factors.

Expansion of the Park into the North Woods, Storza Woods, Halpern and West properties, together with the inclusion of new attractions such as the skate park and soccer fields, will attract considerable numbers of new visitors to the Park. The Garden plans to expand its profile in the region and to continue its sponsorship of blockbuster exhibits and special events. Intown development, particularly the high density residential and mixed use development occurring in Midtown, will contribute to increased Park usage. Similarly, development of the Beltline and adjacent properties into new multi-family residences and a trail system will increase pedestrian, bicyclist, and transit access to and popularity of Piedmont Park.

3. Public/private partnerships such as the contractual relationships between the City of Atlanta and the Conservancy and Garden have enabled the City to provide recreational cultural amenities to its citizens while minimizing the cost to the City.

Some critics of the proposed shared parking deck have suggested that leasing public park space to private entities such as the Garden is inappropriate, and that the City should not be facilitating the use of Park and Garden facilities for rental to private groups and organizations for meetings and receptions. The Task Force observes that the City of Atlanta endorsed the validity of such public-private partnerships decades ago and has continued to expand upon that model as the benefits become apparent.

The relationship between the City and the Conservancy dates back to the first administration of Mayor Andrew Young. The Conservancy was founded in 1989 in response to a recommendation in the 1982 Master Plan. The relationship with the Conservancy has been particularly productive, as it has funded over \$20 million in permanent improvements to the Park as well as contributing to operational and maintenance costs. The model established by the Conservancy has been replicated elsewhere in the City, leading to the successful efforts of the Freedom Park Conservancy to spearhead the development of Freedom Park and the burgeoning efforts of the Grant Park Conservancy.

The City's relationship with the Garden was established during the first administration of Mayor Maynard Jackson. Similar public-private partnerships exist for other City park facilities. During Mayor Andrew Young's tenure, long-term contracts were established with private operators of Lakewood Amphitheatre and Chastain Park Amphitheatre. Public park land in Grant Park has been leased to Zoo Atlanta for many years. Cultural facilities such as Zoo Atlanta and the Atlanta Botanical Garden provide enriching experiences for the citizens of Atlanta, as well as supporting and enhancing the City's illustrious role as a major convention and tourism destination.

Likewise, making Park, Garden and Zoo facilities available for private rental also has been a positive and productive practice. Through such rentals, these organizations have generated income to subsidize operating costs, as well as to provide funds for Park maintenance and improvements. Moreover, such events provide yet another opportunity for visitors to enjoy these amenities.

Nonetheless, care must be taken by City officials to ensure that the public interest is honored with respect to such partnerships. **Public access to and involvement in planning processes such as the development of park master plans must be assured.**

4. Transit access to the Garden and the Park is inadequate.

MARTA access is available from the Tenth Street rapid rail station, which is a ten-minute walk from the southwestern edge of the Park, or the Arts Center station, which is a twenty-minute walk from the Garden entrance. MARTA bus routes 27 (Monroe/Lindbergh) and 45 (Virginia/Frederica) serve the Park, and route 36 (North Decatur) provides access to the Park and Garden from Piedmont Road. Depending on the number of bus and rail transfers required, a trip to the Park or Garden on MARTA could take as long as one hour from many destinations within the City of Atlanta. The fare for a round trip by either bus or rail is currently \$3.50 per person.

Several promising ideas for transit development are under various stages of study and analysis, including the Peachtree streetcar and expansion of the Georgia Tech Shuttle service, each of which potentially could provide access to the Park and Garden. The City is analyzing the steps needed and resources required to support development of the Beltline, which runs along the eastern edge of the Park, into a "necklace" of parks and trails circling the City. In addition, both the City and MARTA are analyzing the feasibility of providing an as-yet-unidentified mode of transit along the Beltline. However, both the timing and funding sources for this proposed transit are uncertain. No funding source has been identified for a regular shuttle service to the Park from the MARTA stations.

5. The park restoration and amenities proposed by the North Woods Expansion Master Plan will yield positive benefits to the residents of the City of Atlanta and surrounding areas.

The proposed Park improvements will rehabilitate and restore 53 acres of greenspace for public use, including a restored stream and a pastoral woodland garden. It will provide amenities that do not currently exist, including a wide variety of active uses, and greatly expanded and enhanced trails for pedestrians and cyclists. The CSO improvements and stream restorations will greatly enhance the Park environment. Development of the West and Halpern sites will provide grand new Park entry ways on Monroe Drive and Piedmont Avenue, thereby further opening the Park to nearby neighborhoods.

The Task Force notes, however, that this considerable expansion of Park acreage will significantly alter the urban fabric. Care must be taken to manage the expansion to assure that growth of the Park occurs in a sensitive and responsible manner. In addition, operations and maintenance costs should be addressed. The Plan does include a maintenance endowment.

6. Pedestrian, bicyclist and wheelchair user access to the Park from surrounding neighborhoods should be addressed.

The traffic study prepared in October 2004 was designed to address the impact of the parking deck. However, it does not appear that any study has been performed to fully address the traffic impact of the North Woods Expansion Plan itself and particularly the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and wheelchair users approaching the Park from the new entrances at the Halpern and West properties. Considerable attention and care has been devoted to designing the various types of trails within the Park and the expansion area. The Task Force finds, however, that analysis should be done and improvements recommended for non-vehicular access at existing and new Park entrances.

7. Current parking options are inadequate to serve the needs of regular Park users and attendees at Conservancy and Garden events, and this shortage will be exacerbated after the Park is expanded to include new gardens and new activities.

The existing 150-space surface parking lot in the Park is woefully inadequate to serve the needs either of casual Park users or of visitors to special events such as weddings and receptions at Magnolia Hall. Similarly, the 121-space surface lot in the Garden does not provide sufficient parking for special events or popular shows. Moreover, the access route to the parking lot along Park Drive creates unacceptable pedestrian/vehicular conflicts. The amount of available parking within the Park boundary has actually declined by 600 spaces in recent years as the other Park entrances were closed to vehicular traffic and on-street parallel parking spaces within the Park were eliminated. While that decision greatly enhanced the usability and safety of the Park for pedestrians, cyclists and skaters, it greatly reduced the availability of free and accessible parking spaces, thereby driving visitors to park in adjacent neighborhoods in greater numbers.

8. The current Piedmont Park Master Plan, adopted in 1995, recognized the parking and access challenges facing the Park but was not designed or intended to provide solutions.

The 1995 Plan did not include a parking needs study or traffic analysis for the Park. The Plan did suggest constructing a small surface parking lot on the Halpern site. However, the Task Force finds that proposal to be both infeasible and inadequate.

9. Construction of a shared parking structure at the proposed hillside location is a proposed option for some of the parking needs of the Garden and Park.

City and regional planners have recognized in recent years that joint parking arrangements should be encouraged wherever feasible. Indeed, the City has amended its zoning code in recent years to encourage shared parking facilities and arrangements among property owners and across a range of uses. The Task Force observes that the City has been provided an opportunity to obtain a privately financed joint parking facility that is convenient to and available for use by Park visitors and by guests at events held within Park facilities.

As the alternatives analysis at Appendix K indicates, other locations for the shared parking facility were considered but rejected as less desirable.

City officials and bond counsel have advised of legal and operational constraints that may preclude use of either the West or Halpern properties as the location for the deck. Some observers have suggested that an underground parking deck could be constructed on the site of the current Garden surface parking lot. The Task Force was presented with evidence that the cost of an underground deck greatly exceeds the cost of the current design (\$37,000 per parking space as compared to \$20,000 per space for the proposed design). Even assuming that sufficient funding for an underground structure could be

obtained, that location is less desirable for Park visitors and would limit or preclude the Garden from constructing its planned greenhouse expansion.

Nonetheless, the Task Force notes that other possibilities exist for providing parking accessible to the Park in addition to the deck. Analysis of on-street parking resources is needed to address this question.

Task Force member Dianne Olansky dissented as to Finding 9.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force recommends that the City of Atlanta endorse and adopt the North Woods Expansion Master Plan as an amendment to the 1995 Master Plan. As the plan is implemented, the Task Force recommends that the following be undertaken:

1. Design and implement the traffic flow and signalization improvements recommended by the October 2004 traffic study before deck construction is completed.
2. Coordinate traffic analysis and associated capital improvement planning and implementation along the southern and eastern boundaries of the Park with other ongoing studies of Monroe Drive and Tenth Street currently underway. The traffic impact of the Master Plan, as amended, must be considered in connection with other planned public and private improvements in and around the Park.
3. Analyze needs and design and fund improvements at the entrance to the Park and up to a one-mile radius beyond the Park boundaries, particularly Monroe Drive and Tenth Street, to enhance access and safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and wheelchair users. Such improvements may include, but not be limited to, the installation of raised decorative cross-walks, additional wheelchair curb cuts, widened sidewalks and improved lighting and signage. Potential funding sources include the proceeds of the 2001 Quality of Life Bonds and other general obligation bond issues, Midtown Community Improvement District CID funds, parks and transportation impact fees, and regional Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds.
4. Evaluate the possibility for adding on-street parking spaces around the Park boundaries. The Task Force specifically suggests consideration of the following options:
 - ♦ Narrow the four existing travel lanes on Tenth Street and add full-time parallel spaces on the north side of the street;
 - ♦ Create parallel parking spaces on Westminster Drive;
 - ♦ Create parallel parking spaces on the east side of Piedmont north of South Prado (where roadway expands to five lanes, one of which is a turn lane); and
 - ♦ Create parallel parking spaces on Monroe Drive.
5. Develop and implement a plan to improve access to and use of MARTA by Park and Garden visitors. Elements of such a plan should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:
 - ♦ Improve signage both inside the Park and Garden and between these destinations and the MARTA stations and bus stops to direct patrons to MARTA.
 - ♦ Examine possibility of improving routes and service to the Park and Garden.
 - ♦ Petition regional and state transportation and planning agencies to use CMAQ funds to support three years of capital and operating costs of a shuttle service to the Park and Garden.
6. Engage safety design professionals to conduct a safety analysis of the parking deck design and approaches and the design for the North Woods expansion plan and recommend strategies to enhance public safety.
7. Examine the possibility of reducing the profile of the parking deck while maintaining a parking capacity of at least 750 vehicles.

Task Force members Dianne Olansky and William Teasley dissented as to Items 1 and 7 of this section of the report to the extent that those conclusions and recommendations endorsed construction of the parking deck. Dorothy Kirkley and Michael Tyler dissented as to Item 7. Oscar Harris abstained as to Items 1 and 7 in the absence of an express finding that the proposed deck location was the preferred solution. With these exceptions, consensus was reached on all other conclusions and recommendations.